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Viewing cable 07MOSCOW3579, THINKING ABOUT KADYROV

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 MOSCOW 003579

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: THINKING ABOUT KADYROV

REF: A) MOSCOW 3495 AND PREVIOUS B) MOSCOW 673

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reason: 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Ramzan Kadyrov recently celebrated his 100th day as

President of Chechnya. Characteristics of the new order are already visible:

-- The appointment of personnel who have no loyalties except to Kadyrov, and the steady elimination of those with independent ties to Moscow or independent bases of support there.

-- An improvement in the economic situation, as well as in human rights (marginally), as Kadyrov centralizes power and independent actors (read: rent-seekers and kidnappers) are reined in and franchised by his administration.

-- Kadyrov's "extraterritorial" efforts to speak for Chechens everywhere, not just in Chechnya.

-- Regional power aspirations, focusing first on re-integrating Ingushetia.

Kadyrov faces hurdles on the way to these goals, including both dissension within Chechnya's ruling elite and the uncertainties in the run-up to the 2008 Russian presidential transition. Without buying into either Kadyrov or his motives (or dealing with him personally), the U.S. should seek ways to engage the people of Chechnya, who lack exposure to the outside world.

End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ramzan Kadyrov celebrated his hundredth day as President of Chechnya on July 14. For three years before that he had been the Republic's strongman, with backing from President Putin that has seen no limits. Putin promoted Kadyrov shortly after the latter gunned down rival Movladi Baysarov -- an FSB lieutenant colonel -- in broad daylight on a major Moscow street. According to a Presidential Administration staffer, Putin ascribes the success of his Chechnya policies to his unlimited backing of Kadyrov. Assumption of the Chechen presidency should just have been a bonus. Nonetheless, tendencies visible before Kadyrov became president have become concrete.

Cutting Out the Competition

¶3. (C) Chechnya has been a mass of federal structures, each representing its own institutional interests and, often, competing clans within those institutions. For the three years before Kadyrov became president, President Alkhanov and, until his resignation, Prime Minister Abramov, each had independent ties to Moscow and bases of support there. The "siloviki," or "power ministries" -- FSB, MVD, MOD -- hate Kadyrov,xxxxx told us, and representatives of each try to work with Chechen factions not loyal to Kadyrov. A good example is ORB-2, the descendant of the RUBOP, the directorate designed to fight organized crime. When RUBOP was broken up (it had itself become an organized crime family) it was integrated into local MVD offices -- but not in Chechnya. There it was subordinated to the Southern District MVD in Rostov, to ensure an MVD presence outside Kadyrov's control.

¶4. (C) All that is changing. When Kadyrov assumed the presidency there was speculation that Putin would insist on the appointment of a Prime Minister with a independent power base, such as Federation Council member Umar Dzhabrailov. Instead, Kadyrov promoted his maternal cousin Odes Baysultanov to the job (he had been First Deputy). Kadyrov named his chief enforcer and right-hand man, Adam Delimkhanov, as First Deputy Prime Minister. It was Delimkhanov who traveled to Moscow to pull the trigger on Baysarov.

¶5. (C) Kadyrov has accused ORB-2 of involvement in kidnapping and torture, and is militating for the group's withdrawal from Chechnya. ORB-2 certainly carries out some of these crimes, but by accusing them Kadyrov is trying both to exculpate himself and rid Chechnya of a structure not under

his control. According to Presidential Administration staffer Aleksandr Machevskiy, overall force levels in Chechnya now stand at 35,000, about half of whom are local Chechens -- most of whom are under Kadyrov's personal control. Trouble is already brewing between Kadyrov and two of Chechnya's most powerful warlords, Sulim Yamadayev of the

Moscow 00003579 002 of 005

"East" Battalion (see below) and Said-Magomad Kakiyev of the "West" battalion, four of whose men were killed in a recent shoot-out with Kadyrov's security forces.

Rebuilding Chechnya

¶16. (C) The centralization of presidential power under Kadyrov has had positive effects on Chechnya's economic and human rights situation, as we have reported (reftels). The human rights watchdog Memorial has documented an 80 percent drop in abductions over the last year, as Kadyrov, exercising the "state monopoly on violence," eliminates or neutralizes kidnappers not working under his direct sanction -- and he now rarely feels the need to kidnap for either economic or political reasons. Human rights improvement has its limits, however. Kadyrov's own "vertical of power," together with his cult of personality, mean that freedom of the Chechen media is not likely anytime soon.

¶17. (C) Chechnya's economy also owes its renewal to Kadyrov's monopoly on violence. In the past, government subsidies were basically bribes to keep Chechnya quiet, given on the understanding that that Kadyrov would pocket any funds that made it to Chechnya past the trough of officials through which it had to flow after leaving the Treasury. The economies of Dagestan and Ingushetia still run more or less on these lines, the latter almost exclusively so. Kadyrov still keeps the subsidies, but now forces other Chechens to contribute to rebuilding infrastructure. Derided as the grand projects are for their facade-deep garishness, they are still an improvement over the vast desolation that the Russians made and called "peace."

¶18. (C) Chechnya is still a profit center for the federal government, despite the missing subsidies. A Chechen xxxxx told us that Chechnya pays more income tax into the federal treasury than neighboring Dagestan, which has nearly three times the population (a tribute to Kadyrov's persuasiveness?). One federal moneymaker that Kadyrov is trying to "devolve" is oil. At present, the Chechen xxxxx told us, Rosneft spends Rs 800-900 million per year in Chechnya to produce oil it sells for Rs 30 billion. The xxxxx suggested that it might be advantageous to end subsidies and create a "Chechneft" analogous to the autonomous subsidiaries of Rosneft that exist in republics such as Dagestan and Tatarstan. Kadyrov has put a toe in this pond by contracting with an American company to recover crude oil from a "lake" of petroleum runoffs near Groznyy, cleaning up the environment in the process.

The Godfather of All the Chechens

¶19. (C) Kadyrov is starting to act as the arbiter of disputes among Chechens outside Chechnya. The prime example is his intervention in a mafia-style dispute involving his chief subordinate Sulim Yamadayev, commander of the "East" Battalion. Yamadayev and some of his men raided the Samson Meat Factory in St. Petersburg on September 15, 2006 (interesting to speculate how they got there from Chechnya, fully armed). Yamadayev was apparently acting as enforcer for a Chechen from Kazakhstan who had an ownership claim that put him at odds with the factory's manager, also a Chechen. Charges were pressed by the visibly battered manager, but he dropped them after two of his brothers were abducted in Chechnya. This would not have been considered unusual if the

manager were not a well-connected Chechen, but Samson's owner is the Moscow Industrial Bank, whose president, Abubakar Arsamakov, is a relative of the plant's manager, and has clout in the Moscow Chechen community. Perhaps as a result of his intervention, in late April Kadyrov ordered Yamadayev to return the missing brothers. Yamadayev protested that he was not holding them or involved in their disappearance. Our sources tell us the two brothers are probably sleeping with the fishes.

¶10. (C) The incident illustrates not only the Russia-wide reach of Kadyrov; it also fits into his drive to eliminate potential rivals. Tensions have been close to boiling with Yamadayev since April. Kadyrov has told a friendly Duma member that he will not allow Yamadayev's brother Ruslan "Khalit" Yamadayev to run for re-election as Duma member for Chechnya. At that point there will be a confrontation.

Ingathering of Lands

¶11. (C) Kadyrov is clearly the strongest figure in the Caucasus. When earlier this month his 10-year old nephew crashed a car he was driving (!) and lay in a coma, notables

Moscow 00003579 003 of 005

from all over felt it necessary to make the pilgrimage to Grozny to condole with Kadyrov. Like his influence, Kadyrov's ambitions extend well beyond Chechnya's borders, in the first instance to its neighbors. Chechen Parliament Speaker Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov floated the idea of uniting the three republics of the Northeast Caucasus (Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan) into one larger unit, in which Chechens would form the largest single ethnic group. In addition, Chechen officials sometimes recall longstanding claims to the Novolak district of Dagestan, which was part of Chechnya before the 1944 deportations. After the Chechens were moved out, the Soviets gave the land to ethnic Laks and changed the borders to keep the Laks (a high percentage of whom were members of the Communist Party) within Dagestan.

¶12. (C) The most likely annexation, however, is the recreation of the pre-Dudayev Checheno-Ingush Republic. Well-placed sources have told us Kadyrov is moving towards this goal, and that it solves a few of Moscow's problems, as well. Ingushetia still has an intractable dispute with North Ossetia over the Prigorodnyy Rayon, and any leader of Ingushetia is forced to sound the drums about the issue at every available opportunity. It would not be so high a priority on Kadyrov's agenda.

¶13. (C) Reintegration is also a way of getting rid of Ingush leader Zyazikov, with whom the Kremlin is intensely dissatisfied, according to xxxxxxxxxxxx. Zyazikov has failed to deal with the Islamist insurgents -- who, it is well known, have thoroughly penetrated Ingushetia's security organs. In addition, his level of corruption, and his shamelessness in flaunting it, is embarrassing even when compared to other provincial leaders in the Caucasus. xxxxxx told us that Zyazikov recently hosted xxxxx at dinner in his palace, built by his predecessor. During the dinner, whose conversation focused on Ingushetia's dire need for outside humanitarian aid, Zyazikov mentioned that he was not fond of the palace, and was going to build another one not far away.

The Challenges Ahead

¶14. (C) Despite his successes to date in consolidating power, Kadyrov's path is not strewn with roses. Kadyrov's neutralization of potential rivals is not cost-free. Chechens are notoriously independent, and when conditions are not to their liking, or they are treated with less than the respect they think is their due, they have an easy place of refuge: the mountains, with the fighters. Rumor has it that already 100 of Yamadayev's followers have taken to the hills

with their weapons. As we have reported, the nationalist-separatist insurgency is nearly dead -- most fighters were co-opted by Kadyrov and his father; the remainder scattered and without much capacity to strike. The Islamist insurgency is thriving, but it is outside Chechnya, in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. But a new, large injection of disaffected gunmen could breathe new life into one of these groups, or sweep them up within themselves.

¶15. (C) Another immediate challenge is the Russian presidential transition of 2008. Kadyrov's deal with Putin is a highly personal one. Putin allows, supports and finances Kadyrov's power and scope of activity in Chechnya, and agrees to abide by the guarantees of immunity and impunity Kadyrov has given his 10,000-15,000 fighters, mostly former rebels like Kadyrov himself. In return, Kadyrov is personally loyal to Putin and ensures that his fighters turn their guns on separatists, Islamists and other enemies of the Russian state. Kadyrov is happy with this arrangement, and was among the first and loudest to support a third term for Putin.

¶16. (C) The succession unleashes unknowns into this cozy deal. On the most basic level, the chemistry might just not be right between Kadyrov and Putin's successor. In such an exceptionally personal deal inside a Russian system already much more personal and less institutional than its western counterparts, that lack of personal rapport can have significant effects. Perhaps for that reason Kadyrov in April hosted one of the two leading candidates, Dmitriy Medvedev, on a tour of Grozny (Presidential Administration staffer Machevskiy, who was in Chechnya with Medvedev, said the discussions focused only on the National Projects).

¶17. (C) Another unknown is what policies the successor will follow. Most Russian officials we have spoken to tell us that Kadyrov is a necessity "for now." What happens if the next Russian president decides he can dispense with Kadyrov and slowly begins to move against him? Aleksey Malashenko of Carnegie pointed out to us that the investigation into the

Moscow 00003579 004 of 005

Politkovskaya murder can be used as a "card" to play against Kadyrov when the time is right -- since Kadyrov's actual guilt or innocence will have no bearing on whether he is accused of the murder. To prevent such action, Malashenko believes, Kadyrov is busy demonstrating how essential he is to keeping the peace in Chechnya; Malashenko even suggested to us that there might be collusion between Kadyrov and the separatist forces of Doku Umarov to keep up a regular stream of armed incidents and attacks. According to Presidential Administration staffer Machevskiy, however, continuity will be provided by Presidential Administration deputy Vladimir Surkov. Surkov, whose father was a Chechen, has developed close ties with Kadyrov.

¶18. (C) A third unknown about the succession is whether Kadyrov will try to over-reach and renegotiate the current deal to get even better terms. Kadyrov's rejection of a treaty officially setting out the power-sharing arrangement between Moscow and Grozny was seen as a demonstration of loyalty, in that any such document would have to retain a mention of Chechnya's sovereignty. Two other factors may be at work, however. First, Caucasians prefer to deal orally rather than set conditions down in black and white, according to xxxxx, who contrasts this characteristic with the legalism of the Tatars (whose own treaty was recently adopted). Second, Kadyrov might see such a document as limiting, rather than confirming, his rights, especially when he starts dealing with Putin's successor. Kadyrov sees Putin as a father, according to all accounts; he will scarcely view the successor with the same deference.

Implications For Governance

¶19. (C) We should not have any delusions that Kadyrov's political achievements or economic successes or even the amelioration of Chechnya's human rights situation herald an era of justice and rule of law. His style of governance implies regulation of violence, but not reluctance to use it; organization of corruption, but not its overall reduction; and recognition of property and other rights of Chechens when outsiders try to violate them, but not with relation to the Chechen elite itself. At the same time, we should place this governance in the context of governance in the Russian regions: as former Parliament Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov told us, "it is only a radical form of what is found in all the regions," with the exception of the application of violence -- which Russians and Chechens justify by the insurgent and Islamist threat, and which is common to all parts of the North Caucasus. The other characteristics -- of institutionalized corruption, dubious property rights, and general impunity of officials -- are present to a greater or lesser degree in many Russian regions.

Implications for the U.S.

¶20. (C) U.S. engagement with Chechnya will be limited not by Kadyrov but by Moscow, at least until after next year's presidential transition. We have been told bluntly that Russia wants to reduce international presence in the North Caucasus, convinced that "Western" powers will use that presence to destabilize the transition. Given those suspicions and parameters, our most thoughtful interlocutors believe that "limited engagement" is the best policy. A number of them have cited conferences (in Chechnya) and exchanges as the best programs to implement that engagement.

¶21. (C) Even that approach presents difficulties. Presidential Administration staffer Machevskiy discussed with us the possibility of holding a model UN at Groznyy University, with U.S. and other western participants and advisors. He promised to draft a proposal, but after it went through his administration's vetting process it came back as a Model EU, to be held not in Groznyy but in Rostov. There is clearly no appetite in the Kremlin for ending the Chechens' isolation.

¶22. (C) Exchanges remain as the best vehicle for U.S. interests. Up to now, programs such as the Young Leadership Program and Open World have been hampered by security concerns from making the visits necessary to select qualified candidates from Chechnya. The U.S. should place priority on making such recruitment possible.

Coming to Terms with Ground Facts

¶23. (C) Beyond the technical aspects of how best to engage, we need to review the context in which we have placed Chechnya. Previous conceptions of the Chechen tragedy, still current in certain think-tank circles, simply do not apply --

Moscow 00003579 005 of 005

the thesis that there is a real government up in the hills, deriving its legitimacy from the electoral mandate Aslan Maskhadov won ten years ago, that is still locked in battle with the Russian invaders and their usurping compradors. That situation ended years ago, with the execution of the deal between Putin and Kadyrov senior: the insurgents won, just a different set of insurgents; those still in the hills no longer represent any more of a moral authority or commitment to democracy than does Kadyrov.

¶24. (C) This is sad for those who were outraged by Russian atrocities in the first two wars and hopeful for the success of the Maskhadov government between them. Sad, but true. Attempts to portray Doku Umarov as a fighter for democracy, or even a fighter against Russian misrule, simply do not correspond with reality. This does not mean we can accept

the Russian version that all opponents of Kadyrov are international terrorists, or that flaws in Umarov's behavior in any way justify Kadyrov's. But it does mean that we need to engage with the Chechen government, at an appropriate non-Kadyrov level, as a prerequisite for engagement with the Chechen people -- and Chechen welfare, so bound up with the stability of the North Caucasus, the containment of Islamic extremism, and the direction that Russia ultimately takes, is a major U.S. interest.

Burns